

Foss Farm Management Plan

August 28, 2014

**Prepared by the
Land Stewardship Committee**

**A sub-committee of the
Carlisle Conservation Commission**

Land Stewardship Committee (2014)

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Foss Farm Management Plan prepared by:

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INTRODUCTION

This Management Plan supplements the “Baseline Assessment for Foss Farm” prepared by the Land Stewardship Committee, and approved by the Conservation Commission, in September 2008. The Baseline Assessment provides the details regarding the acquisition history, the historic uses of the property, a summary of the previous planning and other study documents, as well as the conditions and maintenance activities at the particular point in time in which the document was prepared. The *Baseline Assessment for Foss Farm (September 2008)* is available in Gleason Library, in the Carlisle Conservation Commission’s office in Town Hall (66 Westford Street), and in the Land Stewardship Committee pages within the Town of Carlisle’s website (<http://www.carlislema.gov>).

The intention of this document, as a sequel to the Baseline Assessment, is to itemize the specific management objectives for the property as proposed by the Land Stewardship Committee and approved by the Conservation Commission. Along with the agreed-upon objectives, are the suggested maintenance and other actions necessary to implement the approved management objectives. In addition, this document presents a short description of the relevant activities that have occurred since the publication of the Baseline Assessment in 2008.

The approach of this plan is to identify management units (discrete areas to be managed) for the property and discuss the management objectives and suggested management actions for each management unit.

Foss Farm is a property with upland areas with rolling terrain as well as large expanses of flat lowlands. Much of the upland area in the northwest section of the property is forested (approximately 13 acres). The majority of the property (approximately 44 acres), however, is open fields allowing for some extensive vistas. Other features include an intermittent stream that winds through a wetland, damp forests, and areas of transitional vegetation (meadow to forest). On the property are two pony rings, two agricultural licensed fields, and a community garden area. There also are trails winding through the wooded areas and trails along the perimeter of the fields. Stonewalls border the property and several important species, such as American woodcock, blue-spotted salamander, and several types of turtles (Blandings, wood, painted, and snapping) have found suitable habitat at or near Foss Farm. A state documented Native American site exists on the property. Dogsled training activities have been conducted here for over 40 years. The general features of Foss Farm are shown in Figure 1.

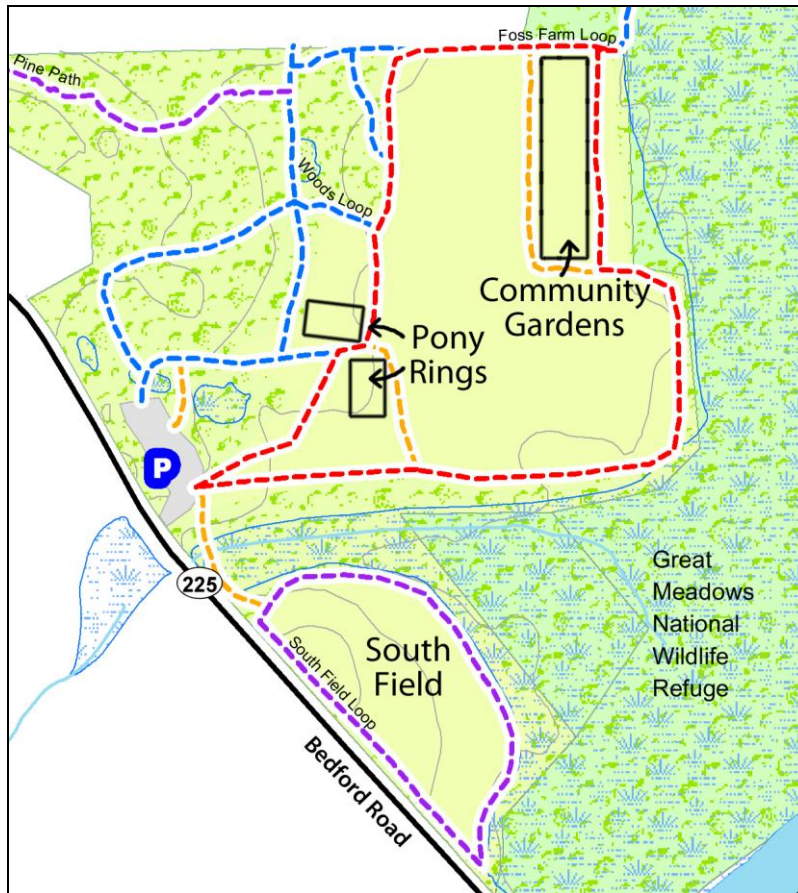


Figure 1. Major Features of Foss Farm

SIGNIFICANT UPDATES TO THE BASELINE ASSESSMENT

As previously stated, a Baseline Assessment prepared in 2008, included a description of the existing conditions of the property at that time. This section describes subsequent efforts on the part of the town and its dedicated volunteers to enhance the condition of the property.

New signage. In 2008, the Land Stewardship Committee, using Community Preservation Act funding, installed new wooden main property signs at the entrance to Foss Farm on Bedford Road as well as at the trail entrance from Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge (GMNWR) in the northeast corner of the property. In addition, other signs were updated or added, including the Rules for Use of Conservation Lands, a private property sign at an unofficial trail head, turtle crossing signs along the garden road, and a sign asking visitors to respect the plants and the produce in the community gardens.

Community garden improvements. Between 2010 and 2011, 3 additional wells were installed at the community gardens, and 4 garden plots and two areas for garden waste were added. Also in 2010, the garden rules were reviewed and revised and an annual rules review process by the Conservation Commission was initiated. An existing well was refurbished and relocated in 2013.

Trail further down Bedford Road. In 2012, a trail was constructed through the upland forest from the first section of the garden road as one travels from the parking area, to Bedford Road near the intersection of Bedford and River Roads (labeled Pitch Pine Path in Figure 1). This was an Eagle Scout project. The intention was to create an additional access point for residents along River Road and in the Stoney Gate neighborhood.

Trail to the south field. In 2013 with CPA funds, the Trails Committee constructed a trail to connect the main part of Foss Farm near the parking area, to the upper agricultural field. Construction of this trail involved building a boardwalk over an intermittent stream and associated wetlands. This trail created a valuable access from the main part of the property to the south field. This connection also allows residents from Skelton Road to enter the Foss Farm trail system.

Invasive plant control. Over a two-year period during 2012 and 2013, the town undertook a significant effort to control invasive plants at Foss Farm. With a combination of funds from the town conservation budget (\$4,500) and a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant (\$29,447) received through a collaborative effort with the SUASCO Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA), buckthorn, bittersweet, multiflora rose, as well as non-native honeysuckle and olive shrubs were targeted throughout large sections of the property. The main focus of this effort was at the field edges, but control work on buckthorn was also carried out in some areas of upland forest and in the non-agricultural fields. Grant money covered the cost of hiring the New England Wildflower Society (NEWFS) to conduct selective herbicide treatment of invasive plants in many areas. Grant funding also covered some the cost of follow-up brush cutting needed to eliminate remaining stumps after the “cut and paint” herbicide treatment. Utilizing town funds, the Conservation Commission hired a land clearing company to clear the Oriental bittersweet, autumn and Russian olive, buckthorn, and other invasive plants from the field edges surrounding the entire south agricultural field. In addition to the monetary investment, several volunteers donated over 150 hours of hard work assisting NEWFS staff in cutting shrubs, hauling brush into piles, and burning brush in late winter. Figure 2 shows the areas where NEWFS staff treated invasives with herbicide. Unless noted otherwise on the map, a wetland formulation of glyphosate was used. Triclopyr was used where specifically indicated to control bittersweet since glyphosate is less effective on this species.

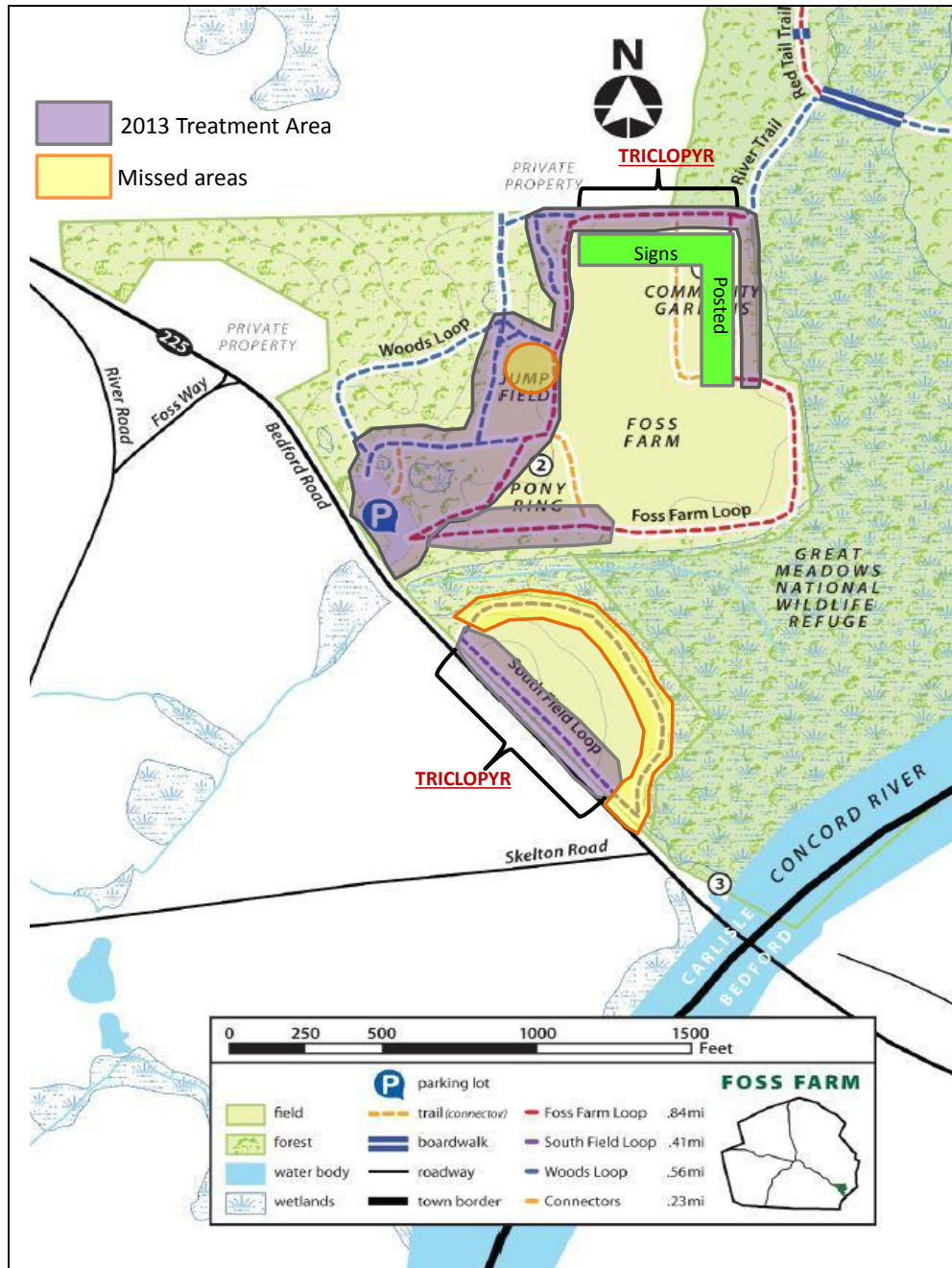


Figure 2 – Areas treated with herbicide by NEWFS staff

Recreation Commission Inquiry. In addition to the improvements described above, the Conservation Commission received an inquiry related to Foss Farm. On October 21, 2013, the Recreation Commission Chair, Rick Amodei, requested that the Conservation Commission formerly address the possibility of locating active recreation fields on town conservation lands, and particularly on Foss Farm and Bisbee conservation lands. The inquiry was informational and not related to any specific proposal. In its written response in March 2014, the Conservation Commission explained that Foss Farm is protected by Article 97, an amendment to the constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which establishes enhanced protections for land held for conservation purposes. In addition, the three sources of funding used for the

purchase of Foss Farm, the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources Self-Help Program, and the Carlisle Conservation Fund, all have restrictions that prohibit future changes of use from conservation purposes to other purposes, such as active recreation. Further, the existing agricultural uses at Foss Farm are protected by the Executive Order #193, “Preservation of State-Owned Agricultural Land.” For more details on each of these items, please consult the letter of March 6, 2014 from the Carlisle Conservation Commission to Rick Amodei, Chair of the Recreation Commission. (See Appendix A.)

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall management objectives for the property are as follows:

- Preserve wildlife habitat and biodiversity and protect water resources.
- Continue monitoring and controlling invasive plant species.
- Support existing agricultural and passive recreation activities
- Maintain open meadow vistas and preserve historic stonewalls
- Foster knowledge and appreciation of the Foss Farm wildlife and ecological resources, the agricultural heritage, the Native American cultural heritage, and linkages to adjacent protected conservation land.

The management units identified and discussed individually are as follows:

- Open areas – North and south agricultural fields; and fields not in agriculture
- Upland forest, intermittent stream, wetlands, and damp woods
- Community gardens and passive recreation activities, including horseback riding and dog training
- Trails
- Parking lot and garden road
- Signs and kiosk
- Stone walls

In general, the existing uses at Foss Farm are great assets to Carlisle and the surrounding towns and are well matched to the overall management objectives listed above. Foss Farm is unique in its ability to support certain activities, such as the community gardens as well as dog and pony activities. There are no alternative locations in Carlisle for these activities.

Another important aspect of this property not mentioned above, is its function as a flood plain for the Concord River. Every year, large parts of the open areas flood and/or become completely saturated, particularly in the spring. The flexibility and nature of the existing uses are able to co-exist with these seasonal conditions.

Open Areas. In this plan, we have divided the discussion of open areas into two categories – agricultural areas and non-agricultural areas. Areas that are currently used for agricultural purposes must be maintained for this purpose. (This was explained earlier in this document and

is discussed in more detail in Appendix A.) However, it is important that the field edges surrounding the agricultural fields be cut back annually to prevent the encroachment of the forest with largely invasive shrubs, which reduces the land available for agriculture over time. It is recommended that the Conservation Commission ask the agricultural licensee to brush cut the field edges once each year as in-kind service for the use of the property.

Open areas that are not used for agriculture should be maintained as meadows. At Foss Farm the combination of forest, field, wetlands, “edge” habitat, and proximity to the Concord River provides rich meadow habitat for a wide range of common as well as rare plants and animals. The Baseline Assessment provides more detail in this regard, and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife BioMap2 program (<https://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/dfg/biomap2.htm>) has more information about the rare plant and animal populations that are supported in parts of Foss Farm that are considered Core Habitat. Management of the meadows should include mowing field edges surrounding the non-agricultural areas for purposes of maintaining the grassland and preventing invasive shrubs from infesting the forest edges. Again, brush cutting every once every year along field edges is recommended. Currently, the Pony Club mows certain areas at least twice during the growing season.

Because a healthy ecosystem able to support wildlife needs to maintain its native plant populations, it is critical to continue the work that was begun controlling invasive plants at Foss Farm. The substantial restoration efforts, which included an investment of over \$24,000 in cash and \$3,000 (150 hours) in in-kind volunteer contributions, can be maintained if field edges are cut back annually since invasive plants tend to colonize field edges. It is recommended that the Conservation Commission seek the assistance of the three major users of the property – the agricultural licensee, the Pony Club, and the community gardens—to contribute in a coordinated way toward maintaining all the field edges. This contribution could be considered as in-kind compensation for using the property free of charge. A suggested distribution of in-kind services is depicted in Figure 3. It is suggested that the farmer clear field edges marked C and D; the Community Garden be responsible for the area marked with a B; and the Pony Club maintain the field edges in the area marked with an A. Clearing field edges would involve mowing as close to the forest edge as possible with a mower or brush hog. It is acknowledged that after several years, the forest edge will slowly encroach on the field as tree limbs grow and impede the reach of the mowing equipment. Nevertheless, this type of annual maintenance is very beneficial to the objective of sustaining the restored field edges and preventing the re-infestation of invasive plants in these areas.

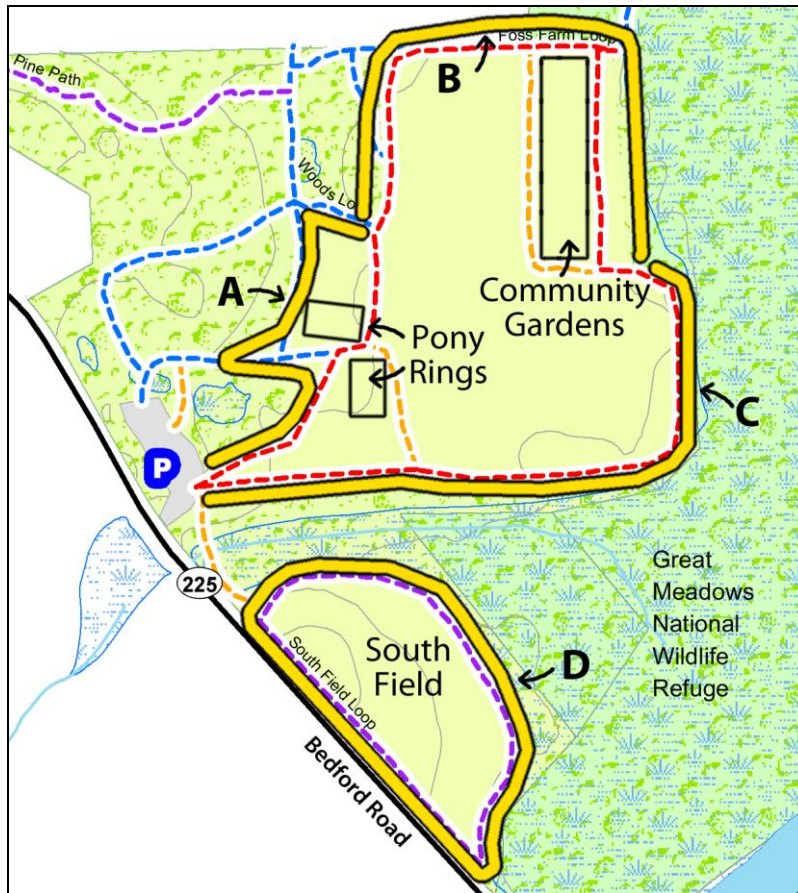


Figure 3. Suggested shared responsibility for field edge maintenance.

Upland forest, stream, wetlands, and damp woods. To the extent possible, the upland forested areas should be monitored for invasive plants. Many of these areas were treated for invasive plant control in 2012 and 2013. In an attempt to prevent re-infestation, work parties of volunteers could periodically pull buckthorn seedlings that sprout in the woods.

Between the southern border of the main part of Foss Farm and the upper field, there is an intermittent stream that eventually empties into the Concord River. The stream has bordering wetlands and damp woods. Most of this area is thickly forested and there are a lot of invasive plants mixed with native trees and shrubs. This section was not treated because it involved work in wetlands and the buffer zone. Monitoring of invasives in this area is recommended and perhaps control efforts might be considered in the future. This area and the shrub border along the east side of the main field are important foraging habitat for American Woodcock. Although it is important to maintain the trail around the perimeter of the field, the trail should not be enlarged or extended further into the shrub border.

Community gardens and passive recreation activities. Foss Farm has an active community garden area offering 104 garden plots. The garden is well run and the garden manager reports the season's activities to the Conservation Commission every year. The agricultural licensee ploughs the gardens in the spring as an in-kind service for use of the property. Also, the town is fortunate in that the garden manager mows around the garden area on his own time, using his own

equipment. It is recommended that the person providing the mowing services be paid a fair market value for that service so that a line item expense for mowing is established in the garden budget. In addition, it is recommended that the garden budget pay for annual field edge clearing once each year along the border of the community gardens and GMNWR, as well as along a portion of the garden road as described above. (See Figure 3.)

For decades, Foss Farm has supported horse and pony riding activities, as well as dog sled training. The members of the Pony Club have been good stewards of the property. The club mows large sections of the property a few times during the growing season. It is recommended that Carlisle continue to support both activities. It is further recommended that the mowing conducted by the Pony Club be coordinated with the meadow management objective to mow right up to the field edge as discussed above.

Many visitors bring their dogs to Foss Farm. There is a dispenser available for people to take bags to pick up after their dogs. The Conservation Commission pays for stocking these bags as well as for private trash pick up. This practice is useful and should be continued.

There are several bluebird boxes in the non-agricultural open areas in the main portion of the property. Tom Brownrigg and other volunteers maintain these nest boxes. In 2013, the Boy Scout troop expressed an interest in helping out with the annual cleaning. Tom Brownrigg spent time training a few Scouts. This is a nice activity for the Scouts.

Trail System. Foss Farm has an extensive trail system that is maintained by the Trails Committee. Many people enjoy hiking, bird watching, and dog walking at Foss Farm. The Carlisle Trails Committee does an excellent job maintaining the trails in the wooded areas. However, the trails that circumscribe the south agricultural field and the agricultural field on the southwest portion of the north field of Foss Farm have not been accessible in recent years. This is due to encroachment of mostly invasive woody shrubs into the field. With the initial land clearing on the south field that was performed in 2013, and maintenance of this edge and the other field edges as recommended in Figure 3, access to perimeter trails could reasonably be re-established if there is sufficient foot and horse traffic to keep down the growth. However, it is likely that the trails will become overgrown at some point during the growing season. Unfortunately, there is currently no means of keeping these trails mowed. (Note: Mowing field edges to maintain open meadows as discussed above, is a distinctly different management objective than that of maintaining trails along the field edges as being discussed here.) Nonetheless, it is recommended that visitors in general, and especially those with horses, are made aware of the new connection with the south field and all of the field perimeter trails so they will be more inclined to use them and possibly keep them from getting too overgrown

Parking lot and garden road. Because the parking lot is very sandy, it occasionally requires re-grading after snowy winters to smooth out the ruts and piles caused by weathering and snow plowing. The town DPW re-grades both the parking lot and the garden road on an as-needed basis. Sight lines for cars exiting the parking lot have to be maintained annually by cutting back the brush along the southern edge of the driveway. It is recommended that this brush cutting be extended to the area along the southern edge of the parking lot all the way to the split rail fence in order to keep the buckthorn from re-growing in that area.

The split rail fence in the parking lot has had some rails replaced in recent years. However, there are currently 8 rails and 2 posts that are either broken and/or need to be replaced. Trees are growing through the fence in some areas and should be cut down. Fence maintenance is an ongoing maintenance need.

There is a designated handicap parking area with proper signage. This feature should be maintained.

Signs and kiosk. As mentioned above, signs were replaced or upgraded in 2008. There are no additional actions needed at this time. The information in the kiosk was also updated in 2008. The kiosk itself needs a new piece of Plexiglas because the existing material is no longer transparent. The materials in the kiosk also need updating.

Stonewalls. There are stonewalls in several places in Foss Farm. The wall along the garden road at the border with the Anderegg property is now visible after the invasive plant control project in 2013. It is recommended that the area in front of this wall be kept clear to maintain the vista, but more importantly to keep the invasive plants and poison ivy from re-growing. It is recommended that all stonewalls on the property be monitored periodically to make sure they are not being vandalized.

Table 1. Summary of Recommended Annual Maintenance Activities		
Maintenance Item	Responsible Party	Description
General property monitoring	Land Stewardship Committee	Monitor general condition of the property, including stone walls. Assist the Conservation Commission with property needs/issues as they arise, including vandalism.
Kiosk	Land Stewardship Committee	Maintain kiosk with updated materials; replace damaged or stolen materials.
Continue controlling invasive plants	Volunteers	Hold work parties to hand pull invasive plants as needed. Mow field perimeter trails during the growing season.
Maintain field edges	Pony Club, Agricultural licensee, and Community Gardens	Share responsibility for field edge cutting once each fall. (See Text and Figure 3.)
Maintain garden road and parking area and its surrounds	Town DPW	Re-grade parking lot and garden road as needed. Brush cut southern edge of parking lot, including along the split

Table 1. Summary of Recommended Annual Maintenance Activities		
Maintenance Item	Responsible Party	Description
		rail fence, and along sides of the driveway/entrance annually.
Dog waste bag dispenser and trash receptacle	Conservation Commission	Continue supplying dog waste bags and trash pickup
Woodland trails	Trails Committee	Continue with trail maintenance of woodland trails.
Field perimeter trails	?	Periodically mow perimeter trails to keep them accessible

APPROVAL PROCESS FOR THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Lynn Knight, Land Stewardship Committee member, drafted the management plan as the intended sequential document to the Baseline Assessment that she and other LSC members completed and was accepted by the Conservation Commission in 2008. This draft management plan was vetted within the LSC and approved for submittal to the Conservation Commission. Lynn Knight presented this draft to the Conservation Commission on June 19, 2014. The Conservation Commission accepted the draft for consideration and discussed it again on July 10, 2014, at which time, the Commission set a public hearing date for August 6, 2014. The draft was placed on the Conservation Commission Web site, a copy was placed at the Gleason Public Library, and the Conservation Administrator had a copy, all for public inspection prior to the public hearing. The public hearing was held and representatives from the Community Gardens, the Pony Club, Mark Duffy (the agricultural licensee), as well as members of the general public were present. Lynn Knight delivered a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the key points of the management plan, and, in particular, the proposed idea of shared responsibility for some aspects of the maintenance plan outline in the Management Plan. All present, agreed in general on the overall concept of shared responsibility as well as other aspects of the plan. Minor comments were offered and noted. Based on these comments, Lynn Knight incorporated all comments and submitted a revised draft to the Conservation Commission on August 21, 2014. A final public hearing was held on August 28th, at which time, this Management Plan was unanimously approved by the Conservation Commission.

Appendix A



Town of Carlisle
Office of
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
66 Westford Street
Carlisle, Massachusetts 01741

Tel: (978) 369-0336
Fax: (978) 369-4521

March 6, 2014

Rick Amodei, Chairman
Carlisle Recreation Commission
66 Westford Street
153 Prospect Street
Carlisle, MA 01741

Dear Rick,

In response to your October 21, 2013 request for the Conservation Commission to formally address the possibility of locating active recreational fields on conservation lands in Carlisle, and particularly on the Bisbee and Foss Farm conservation lands, the Conservation Commission finds that the construction of such fields is subject to Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution; procedures for the disposition of Article 97 lands are discussed below. Based upon our understanding of Article 97 and discussions with Town Counsel, we find that such activity would constitute a change of use of conservation land, and that the activity is not consistent with the conservation purposes for which the Conservation Commission was given the care, custody and control of such lands.

The Conservation Commission has a long history of supporting passive recreational uses of conservation lands, including hiking, running, bird watching, dog walking, cross-country skiing, kite-flying, and more. The Conservation Commission also has supported active recreational activities on conservation lands when such activities do not harm or impair the conservation use of the land and are compatible with the existing conservation or agricultural use. For example, the Conservation Commission has allowed the cross-country running team at the Carlisle Public School to use the perimeter of the agricultural fields at Fox Hill as part of its training and competition route, and in the 1980's the Towle Land was the site of the regional Bill Koch youth cross-country ski program. See also, Carlisle Land Stewardship Committee, "Carlisle's Conservation Land: Guidelines for Use," September 22, 2011 (Table 2, "General Uses Allowed or Prohibited on Town-Owned Conservation Lands").

However, the Conservation Commission does not support recreational activities on conservation lands that are not compatible with conservation purposes. The construction of active recreational fields will involve the removal of soil, placement of drainage systems and fill,



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and construction of associated infrastructure, including irrigation systems, wells, fencing, power, parking areas, storage sheds, and other activities that clearly would convert the land from a conservation use to an active recreation use.

There are significant legal protections for conservation land that prohibit the construction of recreational fields on Carlisle's conservation lands. All of the lands under the care and control of the Conservation Commission, including Bisbee and Foss Farm, are "Article 97" lands. Article 97 is an amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts which creates enhanced protections for conservation land. If a change in use of conservation land is proposed, the Article 97 process requires the following:

- a unanimous vote of the Conservation Commission that the land is no longer needed for conservation purposes;
- a two-thirds majority vote at Town Meeting to take the land out of conservation use, and to submit a "home rule" petition to the state Legislature; and
- a Special Act of the state Legislature supporting the conversion, describing the land and its present and proposed uses, passed by a recorded two-thirds vote of each branch.

A proposal for the construction of active recreational fields on Bisbee or Foss Farm, or any of Carlisle's other conservation parcels probably would not pass the first hurdle of the Article 97 process (a unanimous vote of the Conservation Commission). In addition, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs ("EOEEA") requires replacement of the conservation land with land of equal or greater fair market value and with "significantly greater resource value." It appears unlikely that this requirement for replacement land could be met.

In addition to the Article 97 requirements, Foss Farm has restrictions regarding the use and the change of use of the parcel that arise from the funding sources used in the purchase of the land:

- One source of funding for the Foss Farm purchase was the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. Any project receiving money from this fund becomes permanently protected parkland, and any conversion must be approved by both the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and the National Park Service. In addition, the land converted must be replaced with another parcel of equal monetary value and recreational use.
- A second source of funds for Foss Farm was the Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources Self-Help Program (now known as the Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grant Program). Properties purchased with these funds may be used only for conservation, passive outdoor recreation, and limited agriculture and/or forestry. Policies regarding the Self-Help Program define passive recreation as any activity that can be "casually performed outdoors with minimal disturbance of an area's natural condition," including activities such as hiking, biking, swimming in a natural water body, fishing, wildlife viewing, and camping. EOEEA policies prohibit "active recreation or developed uses" on such land, and include athletic fields (baseball and soccer) as specific examples of these prohibited uses.

- The third source of funds for Foss Farm was the Carlisle Conservation Fund. Such funds are authorized by the Conservation Commission Act, and allow Conservation Commissions to use the funds to acquire and maintain lands within a city or town, and to manage and control the same. The acquisition documents for Foss Farm show that the Carlisle Conservation Commission intended to preserve the land for conservation purposes, but also to continue most uses of the land existing at that time. New activities would be considered so long as they did not conflict with each other or damage the land.

Because Bisbee and Foss Farm are currently in agricultural use, they are also subject to policies in Massachusetts that support the preservation of farmland. Executive Order #193, "Preservation of State-Owned Agricultural Land," signed by Governor Edward J. King on March 19, 1981, instructs state agencies to mitigate against the conversion of state-owned agricultural lands by adopting policies restricting such conversion. Under the Order, "state-owned land" includes all lands purchased in whole or in part with state funds or federal funds administered by the state, and thus would apply to Foss Farm, and could apply to Bisbee in connection to state-allocated funds. In addition, in 1999, the Department of Agricultural Resources adopted a policy requiring the payment of \$10,000 per acre for the conversion to non-farm use of farmland parcels over five acres.

Some have tried to justify the construction of recreational fields at Bisbee and Foss Farm by claiming that such activities were authorized as a part of the purchase, and thus would not be a change in use of the land. The April 10, 1987, Town Meeting vote for Bisbee authorized the purchase of the land for "conservation purposes as provided by Chapter 40, Section 8C of the General Laws, and/or for outdoor recreation to be managed by the Conservation Commission of Carlisle." Some individuals point to the phrase "outdoor recreation" as evidence that the town purchased the land in part for construction of active recreational fields. The Conservation Commission, however, determines that this phrase is equivalent to the term "passive outdoor recreation," as that term is further defined and described by EOEEA and that the phrase is not equivalent to the term "active recreation." In a discussion with current Town Counsel regarding the language of this vote, the Conservation Commission was advised that if the Town had wanted to allow active recreation with a ball field, the vote would have specifically included that language, and without such language, the term means passive recreation. In 1996, during a prior round of discussions of the possibility of construction of ball fields at Bisbee, Town Counsel at that time also determined that the Town Meeting vote designated the land for conservation and passive recreation, and that the development of ball fields would be a change in use that would trigger the Article 97 process.

For Foss Farm, although no recreational activities were included in the Town Vote to purchase the land, an application for grant funding prepared subsequent to Town Meeting included a softball field in a list of possible recreational activities for Foss Farm. A softball field was located on a 2-acre portion of the land for two years, beginning in 1971, the year the land was purchased. This field, however, was abandoned after two years because it flooded and was deemed unsuitable for active recreation. Since that time, that portion of Foss Farm has been actively farmed. See, Land Stewardship Committee, *"Baseline Assessment for Foss Farm,"* September 30, 2008, pp. 19-32 (Historic and Current Uses). Town Counsel has advised the Conservation Commission that the historical use of a conservation parcel is critical in the

determination of whether an activity will be a conversion of use of conservation land. In light of the historic and ongoing use of such area of Foss Farm as agricultural land, it is clear that the construction of ball fields at Foss Farm would be a conversion of conservation use. In addition, there is a fundamental difference between the type of recreation field that was temporarily used at Foss Farm and a modern active recreational field that is engineered, constructed, and includes permanent infrastructure. In conjunction with a request from the Recreation Commission in 2001 for the construction of fields at Foss Farm, a letter from the State Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (now EOEEA) in 2002 indicated that Foss Farm was purchased primarily for conservation purposes and that the construction of ball fields would be problematic.

Additionally, the Conservation Commission finds that construction of active recreational fields on conservation land would violate the public trust. When the citizens of Carlisle vote to expend funds to acquire land, and then place that land under the care of the Conservation Commission, they have entrusted the Conservation Commission to be stewards of that land. It is the duty of the Conservation Commission to manage conservation lands for the purposes for which they were acquired. Proper management includes conducting baseline assessments, authorization of trails, management of invasive species, permitting of special events and activities, entering into agricultural agreements, mowing and other maintenance, and more. It is our determination that the development of active recreational fields on Bisbee, Foss Farm, or any of Carlisle's other conservation lands is not compatible with conservation purposes and would not constitute good stewardship of the land.

We understand that the pursuit of alternate locations for active recreational fields is critical to the Recreation Commission at this time because the Carlisle Affordable Housing Trust is advocating for the development of affordable housing on the Banta-Davis land on existing fields and on acreage that the Recreation Commission has planned for the build-out of additional recreational facilities. However, looking to Town land already dedicated to a conservation purpose to replace fields that may be taken over at Banta-Davis is not a viable solution. As outlined above, there are multiple layers of restrictions that prevent such conversion of conservation land.

The Conservation Commission appreciates that the Recreation Commission has stated that it is not seeking such a conversion of conservation land, but instead has asked for this clarification because Town officials outside of the Recreation Commission continue to suggest that Bisbee and Foss Farm are viable alternative locations for active recreation fields.

From a conservation perspective, the Conservation Commission believes that it is best for the Town of Carlisle for recreational fields and facilities to be centralized and located in one place. The impact of the necessary land clearing and duplication of infrastructure including irrigation and parking on critical water resources, wetland and upland habitats, wildlife, and treasured open fields and vistas, will be much greater if recreational fields and facilities are spread around Carlisle instead of being centralized where the basic infrastructure is already in place.

The Conservation Commission is grateful for the work that the Recreation Commission does to serve the citizens of Carlisle, and we look forward to continuing our mutual efforts for the benefit of Carlisle in this regard.

Sincerely,
Carlisle Conservation Commission

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kelly Guarino", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kelly Guarino, Chairman
Luke Ascolillo, Vice Chairman
Tom Brown
J. Thomas Brownrigg
Peter Burn
Lee Tatistcheff
Annmarie Tenn

Cc: Timothy Hult, Chairman, Carlisle Board of Selectmen
Alan Lehotsky, Chairman, Carlisle Housing Authority
Greg Peterson, Chairman, Carlisle Affordable Housing Trust
Mary Storrs, Chairman, Carlisle School Committee
Marc Lamere, Chairman, Carlisle Planning Board